

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** July 12, 2012

**Agenda Item:** Proposed Harvest Prescriptions for Elk Archery Areas

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Approval of Final Action

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 minutes

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**Background:** In February 2008, the FWP Commission adopted new either sex elk archery permit regulations in seven Missouri River Breaks hunting districts and 23 additional hunting districts outside the Breaks where either sex rifle permits were already in place. Reasons included Consistency, Equity, Management Effectiveness and Hunt Quality. Public input was large and divided. During the 2010-2011 season setting this structure was maintained except in one hunting district (HD 441). While public comment was less divided than in 2008, public debate continued into the 2011 legislature. FWP has assembled two different working groups to review this topic.

Prompted by continued debate and final recommendations of the second working group, the FWP Commission again modified elk archery regulations in these districts for the 2012 and 2013 hunting seasons. This final adoption increased either sex elk archery permit levels, removed HDs 420 and 455 from the districts requiring permits and “bundled” all permits in the 21 districts outside the Breaks. The increased permits were adopted in pursuit of increased hunter access to cow elk to achieve management objectives. Reflecting the second working group’s performance-based concept, the adoption included flexibility to modify regulations based on annual review of harvest relative to management objective(s). This requires review and adoption of annual harvest prescriptions. Applying guidelines of a six-year timeline to reach objective(s) and Commission preference to start small and follow with potentially incrementally larger steps, the following antlerless harvest prescriptions are proposed for the 2012 hunting season. Enhanced efforts will be made to communicate any final harvest prescriptions prior to the hunting season. Post season assessment of estimated harvest relative to these prescriptions would take place in May 2013 and would utilize winter population surveillance and harvest surveys. The proposed prescriptions below represent no proposed change from the initial Commission adoption.

### **BREAKS**

HDs 410/417 – 300 antlerless elk (HD 410), 85 antlerless elk (HD 417)

HDs 620/621/622 – 400 antlerless elk

HD 700 – 205 antlerless elk

### **OUTSIDE BREAKS**

HDs 401/403/450 – 50 antlerless elk (HD 401), 50 antlerless elk (HD 450)

HDs 411/412/426/511/530 – 375 antlerless elk (HDs 411/511/530), 150 antlerless elk (HD 412), 25 antlerless elk (HD 426)

HD 447 – 300 antlerless elk

HDs 500/570 – 45 antlerless elk

HDs 502/510 (west of Hwy 310)/520 (south and east of West Fork of Rock Crk)/575 – 15 antlerless elk (HD 502/510 portion), 35 antlerless elk (HD 520 portion), 25 antlerless elk (HD 575 east of Stillwater River), 80 antlerless elk (west of Stillwater River)

HD 580 (south of Sweetgrass Creek) – 110 antlerless elk

HD 590 and portion of HD 701 north of the Yellowstone River, south of Hwy 12 and west of Sumatra-Myers Rd. – 225 antlerless elk (Bull Mtns), 45 antlerless elk (Pine Ridge)

HDs 702/704/705 – 50 antlerless elk (HD 702), 115 antlerless elk (HD 704), 45 antlerless elk (HD 705)

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** Public comment of any adopted prescriptions ran through 5:00 PM Monday, June 18. Comments are forwarded to the FWP Commission and staff. Relatively few public comments (13) were received. This input was diverse with some speaking broadly to elk archery and only indirectly to the specific decision. FWP will pursue additional public communication to include landowners of final adoptions.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** The Commission may adopt larger or smaller prescriptions with potentially reduced or increased timelines for meeting management objective(s).

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:** FWP recommends adoption of these antlerless harvest prescriptions. The prescriptions represent staff evaluations of population productivity and include staff adjustments recognizing that some harvest levels consistent with a six-year timeline are likely too large to achieve initially.

**Proposed Motion:** I move the Commission adopt the final 2012 elk harvest prescriptions as presented by FWP.